DoD Information Environment RFP # 4TS-TT-01-0001

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

PART I - PROPOSAL FORMAT QUESTIONS:

1. Question: The solicitation requires that proposals be submitted no later than February 26, 2001, 12:00 PM EST. It is requested that the due date/time be extended to February 28, 2001, 3:00 PM EST.

    Answer: Six(6) hardcopies and one(1) softcopy (via email) of the Technical/Management proposal (Volume I) and six(6) hardcopies and one(1) softcopy (via email) of the Price/Business proposal (Volume II) shall be submitted no later than March 9, 2001, 3:00 PM EST.

    Note: Six hardcopies copies replaces 2 hardcopies in Section L-8(3). Under Section L-8(4), the number of copies remain the same. The due date is extended to March 9, 2001, 3:00 PM EST under Section L-8(4) also.

2. Comment: The solicitation states that the government will post answers to questions as late as 20 February. As proposals are due in by noon 26 February, this does not allow offerors reasonable time to incorporate additional information based upon answers provided--particularly since the noon Monday deadline implies that proposals must be sent out on Thursday, 22 February to insure timely receipt (unless one wants to take the risk that a 10 AM Monday delivery schedule can be met and that is not a risk a prudent offeror would take).

    Answer: See answer #1 above.

3. Question: Twenty pages double spaced is limiting particularly considering the technical requirements. Forty pages double spaced seems like a more reasonable length for the technical proposal. Is it possible to increase the maximum technical proposal length?

    Answer: The Technical/Management (Volume I) Proposal length limit is increased to 50 pages. The Price/Business (Volume II) Proposal length has no page limit, however, the content is limited to the information identified in paragraph (8) of Section L-8 of the Solicitation.

4. Question: Considering the large number of technical tasks identified in the SOW, the proposal limit of 20 pages double-spaced does not, in our opinion, allow offerors to adequately describe the technical approach and may therefore adversely affect the Government's ability to adequately evaluate various proposals.

    Answer: See answer #3 above.

5. Question: There is no provision in the proposal format instructions for an executive summary. Do you want an executive summary? If the answer is yes, is it to be included in the page count?

    Answer: An executive summary is not required. An executive summary would be included in page count.

6. Question: Are architectural schematics to be included in the page count?

    Answer: Yes.

7. Question: Can schematic diagrams be 11 by 14 inches for clarity sake? If yes, does it count in the page count as one page or two pages?

    Answer: Proposal diagrams can be 11 by 14 inches. Diagrams are included in the page count. Diagrams count as one page.

8. Question: Are "past history" pages to be included in the page count?

    Answer: Yes.

9. Question: We presume that resumes do not count against the page count and are to be included as an appendix to the technical proposal. Is that correct?

    Answer: Resumes are included in the page count of the Technical/Management Proposal (Volume I).

10. Question: Do past performance and resumes count against the 20 pages? We recommend additional page allocations for these elements of two pages each.

    Answer: Past performance and resumes are included in the page count. See answer #3 above.

11. Question: Page 47 of the solicitation.

    Under "TECHNICAL APPROACH", the offeror is required to "Describe a system architecture and implementation approach". Under "MANAGEMENT PLAN", the offeror is required to "Describe the implementation approach".   If this is not a redundant requirement for describing the implementation approach, could you provide a clarification on what is required under each section.

    Answer: Under "Technical Approach" Implementation Approach includes proposed technologies for components and system integration relative to scalability, portability, extensibility, maintainability, trade-offs, etc.

    Under "Management Plan" Implementation Approach includes the soundness of the proposed management implementation/execution approach relative testing, schedule, risk analysis, control/tracking, contractor/HPCMP personnel interaction, etc.

12. Question: Do tables have to be double spaced, 12 point? May we recommend that tables be single spaced?

    Answer: Tables can be single spaced, 12 point.

13. Comment: We request that a table of contents page be allowed for ease of review and not be counted towards the page limit.

    Answer: A table of contents will not count towards page limit.

14. Question: Is any cover letter that is separate from the bidders Technical/Management proposal volume included in the 20 page proposal length limitation?

    Answer: A cover letter is not required. A cover letter would be included in page count.

PART II - TECHNICAL QUESTIONS REGARDING THE STATEMENT OF WORK:

15. Question: Are the "file specifications" sections suggestions or requirements? They are written as if they are requirements but the Statement of Work (SOW) implies that they are merely suggestions.

    Answer: **The "file specifications" referenced in SOW, page 6, is a suggestion.   The "metric/expansion factor specifications" referenced in SOW, page 8 is a requirement.**

16. Question: SOW page 5 says, "Any and all access to the IEDA must ultimately derive from an MSRC or DC approved hardware token." Can we assume this applied only to interactive access? If not, what sort of hardware token can be used for non-interactive use (e.g., upload of queue status information)?

    Answer: **All *user* access must derive from a hardware token. Access from one component part of IE to another must merely be strongly authenticated (e.g. copying queue status info from one IE process to another IE process). It might be acceptable to use SSH with RSA keys, Kerberos 5 with infinitely renewable tickets, or some sort of PKI-based authentication. Simple host-based authentication (e.g. regular Berkeley r-commands like rcp) is unacceptable. Proposed method must not open any holes which users can exploit (i.e. ssh with RSAAuthentication for IE components should not open the door for RSAAuthentication by users)**

17. Question: Where physically is the database intended to be located? (our assumption is Wright-Patterson Air Force Base)?

    Answer: **The final data architecture will be hosted at one or more HPCMP site(s). The proposal should include hosting requirements and trade-off discussions on performance, fault tolerance and robustness between distributed and centralized databases. (see http://www.hpcmo.hpc.mil/Htdocs/MSRC/index.html and http://www.hpcmo.hpc.mil/Htdocs/DC/index.html)**

18. Question: Is the Contractor to provide the hardware to run the database on or will it be GFE?

    Answer: **The final data architecture will be hosted on GFE. The host site(s) is dependent on the GFE hosting requirements. The contractor should include proposed GFE requirement specifications and configurations for hosting the IE architecture (e.g. power, storage, software, licenses, network connectivity, etc). Re-utilizing current systems is preferred where applicable and/or appropriate, but is not required. The GFE cost is not required to be included in the proposal cost. Pricing of the GFE will not affect the evaluation of the proposal. See answer #20 below for a partial list of current supporting architectures.**

19. Question: Producing a "to be" architecture diagram that addresses methodology, interfaces, and data flow requires the analysis of current system architectures, current system interfaces, current system standards, current data standards, current security implementations, and current engineering practices. The first task to be undertaken by any implementation team would be to produce a "to be" architecture diagram to be used as a guide in developing the 5 required tools. This "to be" architecture would provide a description of the component, their interfaces, and their security interfaces. Obtaining enough information to perform even a basic analysis would require interfacing with MSRCs and DPs. The SOW has cautioned against such contacts. How does the government expect a contractor to address the requirements of the Technical Approach without doing the necessary analysis? Is it sufficient to describe how the requirements of the Technical Approach will be accomplished by the successful bidder?

    Answer: **The bidder would define basic mechanisms/architectures using industry standards to interface with either XML flat files or with conventional databases including Oracle and MS Access. The individual site(s) would be responsible for developing the processing necessary to create the**

corresponding interface as well as maintain this interface for their site. The winning contractor would be responsible for producing the final XML specification in consultation with HPCMP management. The HPCMP sites would be responsible for any local idiosyncrasies in interfacing with the standard data repositories and/or data architectures. Many partial solutions are currently in place throughout the HPCMP. Existing solutions, functionality and operational procedures where relevant, appropriate, applicable and available will be made available to the winning contractor. Bidders should be familiar with best practices (e.g. Grid Forum, commercial, academic, etc.) when proposing the re-using of existing solutions and/or ab-initio solutions.

20. Question: What is the current architecture?

    Answer: **The current architecture is heterogeneous (see partial listings below and at http://www.hpcmo.hpc.mil/Htdocs/SAAA/dc_hw.html):**

a. HPCMO – Supporting Architecture: Netscape Enterprise Webserver 3.5, Microsoft Access Database, Coldfusion 4.5 (DBC), Iplanet Webserver 4.0 (aka Netscape Enterprise Webserver 3.5), Oracle Database 8i, Microsoft Access Database ,Coldfusion, Java Servlets, and JavaServer Pages (note: there is some questions about security vulnerabilities with Coldfusion), Sun Enterprise 450R Server (dual 450Mhz processors, 256 Mb RAM, 30Gb, disk, Solaris 8.0).

b. ARL - Computational Architecture: IBMSP3, CraySV1, SGIO38K, SGIO2K, SunE10K_U2; Supporting Architecture: Database Oracle 8.1.6. Remedy Software, which sits on top of Oracle for integrated system management, Sun Enterprise 3000 (dual 248 MHz processors, 512 Mb RAM, 36 Gb disk, Solaris 2.6)

c. ASC - Computational Architecture: IBMSP3, COMPAQES40, SGIO2K; Supporting Architecture: Database (SUN450, SUN5000, Solaris2.8, Oracle 8.1.5),WWW(SUN_E250, SUN_Ultra10, Solaris8, Apache 1.3.14)

d. ERDC - Computational Architecture: SGI Origin 3000, IBM SP, IBM P3, Cray T3E(all running PBS). Supporting Architecture: Sun Ultra Enterprise 6000 running Solaris 2.6, Oracle 8i, Apache 1.3.14, and Netscape 4.7, SAMsuite/SAMwrap for COTS utilization reporting.

e. NAVO - Computational Architecture: IBM SP3, CraySV1, CrayT3E, CrayJ90, SGIO2K, SGIOnyx, SGIOnyx2, SUNE10K, SUN E6500; Supporting Architecture: Origin 2000 (database server), SUN 220R (web server), Oracle 8.1.6, Oracle 8.05, Linux PC, Windows PC, Mac, SGI Indy

f. NRL - Supporting Architecture: NT Server using MSAccess dB with serverside JavaScripts.

21. Question: Where are you getting user information from ie LDAP server?

   Answer: The initial data population will be gathered from Centers, the HPCMO, and/or S/AAAs. Subsequent updates of user information will come from the users themselves. Currently user information is emailed to the resource site(s) from users Section II account application form. Local account representatives manually enter the user information into local supporting databases. (see http://www.hpcmo.hpc.mil/Htdocs/Forms/application-form.html)**.**

22. Question: How many total users; Which agencies, Bases etc and locations does it cover?

   Answer: See HPCMP User Demographics at www.hpc.hpc.mil/Htdocs/RFI/index.html, as referenced in Solicitation 4TS-TT-01-001, Section C-2, page 6.

23. Question: Is there security in place or require a new system?

   Answer: Users are currently pre-authenticated onto hardware resources using Kerberos 5 with SecurID hardware. The contractor must provide a common web interface to data architecture(s) without compromising or reducing the current level of security. The final security architecture will be hosted on GFE. Proposed security method will contribute to whether a "new" system is required or not.

24. Question: What are the current Platforms and underlying databases?

   Answer: See answer #20 above.

25. Question: Where will this be hosted?

   Answer: See answer #17 above.

26. Question: It appears that the wording of task 4 on page 8 of the SOW is unclear. The solicitation states:

   "The IEDA shall be implemented using industry standards and implemented in a secure robust environment supporting 24 x 7 operation. The network and system performance must be sufficient for supporting the entire HPCMP operations."

   It seems that more appropriate wording for this task might be:

   "The IEDA shall be developed in conformance with industry standards and must be sufficient for supporting the Information Environment of the entire HPCMP. The lEDA must be able to be implemented in a secure robust environment supporting 24 x 7 operation."

   Is our interpretation correct?

   Answer: The IEDA shall be implemented using industry standards and implemented in a secure robust environment supporting 24 x 7 operation. The network and system performance must be sufficient for supporting the entire HPCMP IE operations.

27. Question: Should the system actually perform the quota adjustment for the allocation exchange or just provide the trading environment and the information to the S/AAAs to manually adjust them?

    Answer: **The system should automate the process as much as possible. Currently an email notification to the resource site(s) "initiates" the quota adjustment. Actual adjustments of allocations are subject to local site procedures. The system should provide a mechanism to allow S/AAAs to notify, coordinate and handshake the "initiation" of the exchange of allocations. "Initiation" consists of updating all the data fields and action flags within the IE system (including local standard data repositories) so that the associated site(s) could download all the needed information to adjust their local support data systems and operational computational processes.**

28. Question: The SOW mentions the development of XML file specifications as the interface with the repositories each site, but all the examples in Documents #5 and #6 are CSV flat files. While the system should support both and additional formats, is there one particular preferred format?

    Answer: **XML, Flat files.**

29. Question: The SOW states that the IE has to report on COTS software utilization: number of accesses, cpu time, number of oad references for libraries, etc. We do not know what is being logged at all the sites. Is the contractor required to ensure that these statistics are being logged at the HPC sites, or are we responsible only for maintaining and displaying the information which the sites choose to log?

    Answer: **The IE system can only be responsible for data made available by users and/sites. The contractor is responsible for providing interfaces, data fields, mechanism, etc., for maintaining and reporting SOW , page 8, Allocation/Utilization Reporting Deliverable Requirements #5 - #17.   The HPCMP is responsible for what statistics are being logged at the HPC sites.**

30. Question: Any database allowing remote access should have a secure authentication method (such as Kerberos). However, the RFP also says that the contract must support open standard database interfaces including MS Access; which doesn't provide any strong authentication mechanism. Is it the contractor's responsibility to ensure that the access method chosen by individual HPC sites is secure? What is the appropriate response if an HPC site says they want us to access their insecure database, and that that is the only method they choose to support?

    Answer: **In cases where the database itself does not provide sufficiently strong authentication the contractor must provide a secure method for accessing the database. Possibly acceptable solutions include VPNs, port forwarding under SSH, or using Kerberos5 rsh or rcp to transfer data. The requirement for interactive authentication involving a hardware token (SecureID) may be waived when both parties are system processes rather than user processes, but the method used must still support strong authentication and encryption.   It is the responsibility of the HPCMP to ensure that a secure method for accessing the database is supported by the individual IE sites.   The contractor is responsible for working with HPCMP security personnel at all stages of the implementation to insure security integrity.**

PART III- MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS:

31. Question: Is there an expected cost range or funding limitation that you can share with us?

   Answer: The cost range is commensurate with deliverables and is competitive.

32. Question: Where will the work be performed?

   Answer: The majority of work will be performed at the contractor's site(s). Work that requires to be performed at a non-contractor site should be described and included in Volume I, Management Plan.

33. Question: Is there an incumbent contractor? If yes, who is it?

   Answer: No.

34.   Question: Is there a current contact S/I (system Integrator) in place/ are they on site/ name?

   Answer: No.

35. Question: Is this 100% small business set-aside?

   Answer: No. This is full and open competition.

36. Question: Section L-8 (8) of the solicitation requires offeror to "submit a pricing proposal that includes a price with supporting information" including materials, direct labor, indirect cost, and other costs such as travel. As this solicitation is for a fixed price-based competitive procurement, it is expected that price reasonableness will be established by adequate competition per FAR 15.403-1. Shouldn't the request for supporting information from the offeror at least be deferred until responses are received and it can be determined whether adequate competition existed? In all events, per FAR 15.404-1(b), isn't it correct that supporting pricing information should not be required to include details of the separate cost elements of the proposal?

   Answer: Section L-8(8)(a) of the solicitation is revised in its entirety as follows:

   Offerors must provide pricing by tool which is identified by SubCLINs in Section B and the Statement of Work.

   Section L-2 is revised as follows:

   FAR 52.215-20 - REQUIREMENTS FOR COST OR PRICING DATA OR INFORMATION OTHER THAN COST OR PRICING DATA (OCT 1997)

   (a)   Submission of cost or pricing data is not required.

   (b)   It is anticipated that adequate price competition will be accomplished therefore, no cost element breakdown is required at time of proposal submission. However, in the event adequate price competition is not realized, Information Other than Cost or Pricing Data, may be required. This may include a cost element breakdown. Offerors will be notified after proposal submission if more information is required to enable the Contracting Officer to determine that the proposed price is fair and reasonable.

37. Question: E-3(b) states the government will accept or reject the milestone deliveries within 30 days, however, it does not state the acceptance or rejection criteria which will be used for this determination. Can the government please provide the acceptance criteria of each deliverable so that we may properly assess the cost of development of the IE?

    Answer: **See section F-3(a),(b),(c),(d) and (f), Deliveries or Performance, pages 12-13.**

38. Question: E-3(c) states there is a thirteen-month warranty for all software defects. This statement is completely open-ended and the risks are not bound. Therefore it is impossible to efficiently price this risk on a fixed basis. Can the government bound this statement? For example, if the deliverables meet acceptance per E-3(b) the warranty is not necessary. Consider striking this clause and implementing acceptance criteria in E-3(b).

    Answer: **Section E-3(c) Thirteen-month warranty is revised to six months in accordance with SOW Deliverable Requirements Upgrades/Enhancements/Bug Fixes Requirements #51 - #72, page 10. The required contractor six-months warranty services applies to all inspection and acceptance or rejection milestone deliveries referenced in E-3(b), except where subsequent acceptance of E-3(b) milestone deliveries completely supersedes prior milestone delivery inspections and acceptance or rejection as provided in written notification by the government. Absent written notification, the six-month warranty applies to SubCLINS 0001AA, 0001AB, 0001AC, 0001AD and 0002AB separately and concurrently.**

39. Comment: E-3(d) asks the contractor to warranty all "analysis, design, plans and specifications of this effort" for a period of two years. This is again a very open ended risk given acceptance in E-3(b). Suggest deleting this clause as the risks that are introduced will result in higher cost to the government for the contractor to cover this risk. Consider striking this clause and implementing acceptance criteria in E-3(b).

    Answer: **Section E-3(d) two-year latent defect warranty on analysis, design, plans and specification is replaced with warranty as specified in answer #38 above.**

40. Question: Section F-3(d) states that five additional sites will be chosen by the HPCMP, however for a FFP bid we must know the location of the sites to price the travel. Can the government provide the location of the sites?

    Answer: **See answer #17 above.**

41. Question: Section H-4 (c) states "the government will determine "action" to be taken…" Under a very tight FFP schedule this "action" must be decided and executed within a fixed period of time, i.e., no more than three days. Can the government bound the time period for government action for the purpose of pricing this contract?

    Answer: **Actions to be taken by the Government on contractor's identified problems will be determined within 3 workdays of receipt of notification of any discrepancies.**

42. Question: Section L-2(a) refers to section L-6 (8) for details on cost and pricing data, should this reference be L-8 (a)?

    Answer: **Section L-2 and Section L-8(8)(a) have been revised. See Answer to Question #36 above.**

43. Question: This is a FFP services proposal per section H-1 of the RFP and it is assumed to have adequate competition. Why are full cost build up details being requested per section L-8 (a)?

Answer: **Section L-2 and Section L-8(8)(a) have been revised. See Answer to Question #36 above.**

44. Question: Should production system and other government furnished equipment costs be including in the proposal cost?

Answer: **See answer #18 above.**

45. Question: H-4 indicates development equipment is the responsibility of the contractor, will existing hardware and software be provided for the production system and if so, when will the government require a list of additional equipment requirements?

Answer: **See answer #18 above.**

46. Question: Is there a requirement or desire for the IE developer to have external certification by the Systems Engineering Institute Capability Maturity Model (SEI CMM)? Who are the client participants in the lE configuration management process?

Answer: **A SEI CMM certification is not required. A SEI CMM certification will be considered to be favorable in proposal evaluation. The winning contractor will be notified of the identity of the HPCMP IE configuration management team.**

47. Question: To enable an accurate and equitable portrayal of the total costs of hardware, and software required for the IE solution, please indicate the desired location of the system installation (a specific MSRC or the HPCMO headquarter?), and specify what type of uninterruptable power supply, server, storage and software licenses are available at that site for IE system operations. Also, it is acceptable to schedule testing on MSRC site and equipment?

Answer: **See answer #18 above.**

48. Question: Are there written deliverables in addition to the CLINs that the IE users will expect to review and approve?

Answer: **No.**

49. Question: Have the beta sites been selected, or will the contractor select them at their discretion?

Answer: **The HPCMP IE personnel are responsible for determining the beta and full release sites.**

50. Comment: In order to accurately estimate the cost of this effort, the following information, which is related to the current operations of each of the beta site, is required:

a) Operating system(s) platforms,
b) Network connectivity and firewalls,
c) Number of users
d) Current procedures for user security profile creation, maintenance, and management
e) Current procedures for resource allocation data storage, analysis, and management.

Answer: **See answers # 18 and #19 above.**

51. Question: Once the system management activities are centralized, where will the host server be located?

 Answer: **See answer #17 above.**

52. Question: How long is "a few minutes" as referred to for accessing submitted job status information (page 7 of the RFP)?

 Answer: **A few minutes can be defined as greater than 3 minutes, but less than 15 minutes.**

53. Comment: Please confirm that the proposed system is required to be updated on a real time basis.

 Answer: **The IE system is required to be updated on a real time basis.**

54. Question: Are there any related documents, web sites or newly imposed policies that could impact the project deliverables? If yes, can they be made available to us?

 Answer: **No.**

55. Question: In section F-3 DELIVERIES OR PERFORMANCE, paragraph (a) specifies the delivery of two of the five initial prototype tools NLT 90 days after contract award and states that "The initial prototype(s) can use existing tools where applicable." Where can prospective bidders obtain information about the nature and capabilities of the existing tools which are referenced? Can this information be posted to the Web?

 Answer: **See answer #19 above.**

56. Question: Which incumbent contractor or contractors had a role in the preparation of the specifications/statement of work or associated documentation on the HPCMP web site, and are they or their subcontractors permitted to bid on this RFP?

 Answer: **See answer #33 above.**